

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2018

The Honorable John Sullivan
Deputy Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Deputy Secretary Sullivan,

We urge you to contain and confront ongoing Russian information warfare that utilizes anti-Semitic propaganda and religious bigotry to sow dissent and virulent hatred in our open society and those of our allies. Our intelligence agencies have assessed that Russia uses paid social media users or “trolls” to conduct covert divisive influence campaigns against the United States. The Anti-Defamation League identified a startling volume of anti-Semitic harassment throughout social media during the recent presidential election. Data disclosed to the Senate Judiciary Committee by Twitter and other social media platforms demonstrates that Russia amplifies hate speech and promotes nativist extremist ideologies in the U.S., Europe, and elsewhere. You must also forcefully condemn President Putin’s recent defamatory denial of responsibility for these attacks, in which he misleadingly suggested were conducted by Jews and other Russian minorities. Acting against anti-Semitism is a meaningful step to take away a tool employed by Russia to malignantly influence our elections and society.

First, we request that you apportion necessary funds to the Global Engagement Center (GEC) to expose and diminish the harmful impact of Russian-promoted anti-Semitism. The Anti-Defamation League has identified over 3,500 instances of Russian troll accounts amplifying the messages of known white supremacists on social media, spreading hateful messages designed to tear America apart. Congress directed the GEC to lead a whole-of-government response to the serious political and social threats posed by Russian propaganda. However, according to reports by the *New York Times*, the State Department has repeatedly delayed requesting Congressionally-allocated funds and has not hired staff with the appropriate expertise. These activities should be coordinated with the Bureau of Public Affairs and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, which have experts and regional staff well placed to identify emerging trends and provide grants

to local NGOs. A critical component of this effort must be understanding Russia's use of anti-Semitism and protecting the threatened journalists both at home and abroad that can mitigate the harm of Russian hate speech.

Second, we request that you incorporate the identification of Russian and other state disinformation campaigns – including the use of anti-Semitism – into the training of American Ambassadors and Foreign Service Officers so they can recognize and publically respond to these attacks. In its most recent Human Rights Report, the Department of State notes that anti-Semitic rhetoric in Russia is primarily manifested on state television channels and then broadcast abroad, with a consistent pattern of pro-Kremlin media and influence efforts providing an unchallenged stage for bigotry. The rise of Kremlin-endorsed anti-Semitic movements in Europe has gone hand-in-hand with increased threats and violence against Jewish communities. Anti-Semitic violent assaults last year increased 34% in the United Kingdom and 26% in France. We have seen a disturbing trend of attacks against synagogues, desecration of Jewish cemeteries, and a rise in Holocaust denialism. Similarly, terrorist groups recruit new members over the Internet through spread of anti-Israel messages and other hateful narratives. We strongly encourage you to act to ensure that the United States is a leader and effective advocate for protecting minority Jewish communities around the world at a time when their rights and safety are increasingly threatened. You should ensure that State Department personnel stationed abroad are aware and able to respond to these attacks.

Third, we request that you cooperate with our allies, such as Sweden and our NATO members that are also engaged in confronting this common threat to develop a unified response. Russia has for decades pushed propaganda that promotes its interests and aims to divide democracies. However, social media provides a new targeted and direct way to do so. We have now seen that social media platforms will be a possible battlefield, and that targeted countries are beginning to experiment with their defenses. Norway has recently published a four-year national action plan to combat anti-Semitism that covers educational curriculum, academic research, public surveys, funding for public events, support for civil society, and international grants toward protecting culture and history of European Jews. The German government has also designed preventative strategies and model projects for local communities and schools that can provide best practices for others. While it is not possible to jam Russia's anti-Semitic efforts, it is possible to build a common understanding with our allies to monitor and diminish the impact.

If you need further authorities or assistance from Congress to accomplish this task, we urge you to inform us. We urge you to work with us as the threats posed against our nation take new forms and to continue the United States' historic and unique role in the defense of religious liberty.

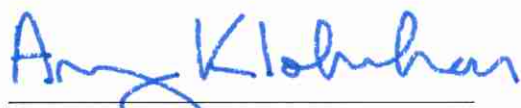
Sincerely,



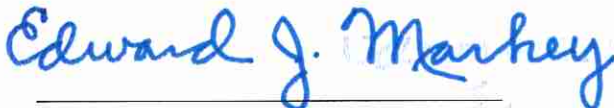
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator



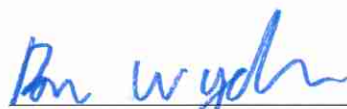
ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator



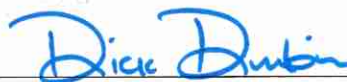
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